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SUBJECT: TERRORISM PREVENTION BRANCH PERFORMING WELL, FACES BUDGET
WOES

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) John Sandage, Officer-in-Charge of UNODC's Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), briefed UNODC member states on July 7 on the Branch's mid-year 2009 Project Implementation, as well as its ongoing budget woes. Like many UNODC branches, Sandage said TPB will also suffer a funding shortfall in 2009 - currently estimated at USD 3 million. Unless funds are identified soon, TPB will likely offset this anticipated loss by cutting programming and staff in 2009 and 2010. Sandage also briefed on new initiatives, including an on-line training course, sub-regional training sessions, and capacity-building assistance, to encourage a universal legal regime against terrorism. END SUMMARY.

FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS

¶2. (U) At a well-attended informal briefing for member states on July 7, John Sandage, Deputy Director of the UNODC Division of Treaty Affairs, acting in his capacity as Officer-in-Charge of the TPB (TPB Chief Cecilia Ruthstrom-Ruin remains on maternity leave until October) provided his first briefing to member states, focusing on TPB January -June 2009 accomplishments and budget shortfalls.

¶3. (SBU) Performance highlights emphasized by Sandage included counter terrorism legal assistance to 120 countries through national and, increasingly, regional, workshops, training of 1050 national officials in these countries, coordination with the UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), and TPB's role in the UN Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). As a result of these activities, stressed Sandage, there were 17 new ratifications of various counter terrorism conventions, better trained national officials, and stronger UN counter terrorism coordination. In addition to the traditional training workshops, TPB has identified ways to reach a larger audience with fewer resources. Included in these efforts is an on-line training course which has received kudos from initial participants, and the on-going development of a comprehensive legal counter-terrorism training curriculum for criminal justice officials. The latest on-line course will be held in French (earlier versions were in English). Some member states urged courses in Spanish; Sandage explained that TPB supported courses in a variety of languages, but had faced budget limitations in developing more such courses.

¶4. (SBU) Sandage noted that UNODC continues to focus its counter terrorism work along a thematic approach, with TPB in the lead in coordinating integration efforts across UNODC divisions. Wearing its CTITF hat, TPB continues to build integrated assistance software to track UN counter terrorism assistance (Madagascar and Nigeria are the pilot countries), and TPB has provided input for three CTED

country visits. Sandage stressed that these steps to better coordinate among UN entities demonstrates UNODC's vision of delivering as both "one UNODC and one UN."

THEN THE BAD (BUT NOT UNEXPECTED) NEWS

15. (SBU) After setting the stage with TPB's accomplishments, Sandage turned to a detailed breakdown of the TPB's financial situation. Nearly 90 percent of TPB's budget is based on rapidly declining voluntary contributions (USD 8 million of USD 9.1 million in funding in 2008). These voluntary contributions sustain 46 experts in headquarters and the field and 13 support staff. (Note: TPB had hoped to field two new experts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The status of this proposal remains unclear due to funding limitations. Subsequently Sandage approached Charg about possible U.S. funding for the Pakistan position. End Note.) Currently, Sandage projects a USD 3 million budgetary shortfall in 2009. TPB has projected USD 8 million (at 2008 levels) in 2009 expenditures and estimates donor contributions for 2009 at USD 5 million (USD 1.7 received to date; USD 3.3 million in additional pledges estimated by end of 2009), creating a USD 3 million shortfall. According to Sandage, if this shortfall is not addressed, 13 field expert contracts would likely not be renewed in 2009 and TPB 2010 programs would be reduced by 30-38 percent across the board. Therefore, stressed Sandage, even accounting for late-breaking donor country commitments, TPB is nonetheless planning for cutbacks. Such cutbacks are a direct reversal of TPB's steady growth, explained Sandage; until 2009, TPB's budget has increased annually since 2002, and the projected USD 3 million shortfall would return TPB to its 2005 budget levels.

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COMMENT

16. (SBU) The mid-year briefing repackaged previous reports on TPB's credible work in promoting the implementation of the universal legal regime against terrorism. The updated statistics on the number of countries reached, ratifications achieved, and officials trained demonstrate TPB's continued achievements in its specific counter terrorism niche. The focus of the presentation, however, was not the accomplishments but rather the need for an infusion of voluntary contributions in order to maintain the TPB's level of on-going activities, and development of future projects in priority countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the last decade USG has contributed between USD 150,000 and USD 450,000 annually. Sandage undoubtedly harbors the hope that this will increase. He may use the vehicle of enhanced activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan to justify need for more funds. END COMMENT.

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